

***Inventory of Critical Biological Resources  
for the  
South Platte River Watershed***

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**Final Report  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**

By:

The Nature Conservancy  
Colorado Natural Heritage Program  
Wyoming Natural Diversity Database  
Nebraska Natural Heritage Program

June 1996

# ***Inventory of the Critical Biological Resources for the South Platte River Watershed***

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Final project report submitted by The Nature Conservancy<sup>1</sup> in cooperation with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program<sup>2</sup>, the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database<sup>3</sup>, and the Nebraska Natural Heritage Program.<sup>4</sup>

## **Preface**

In January of 1994, the Nature Conservancy in cooperation with the Natural Heritage Programs of Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska, the Environmental Protection Agency (Region VIII) and the Denver Water Board, began a project which has subsequently led to major improvements in the quality and quantity of information about the biological resources of the South Platte River Watershed.

The majority of Colorado's human population dwells and works in the South Platte River watershed, which supports a significant agricultural and recreational economy. It also possesses numerous biological values. With so many opportunities available, it is not surprising that there are conflicting proposals for land and water use. Thus, any tool that can synthesize information for the purposes of proactively planning for conflict-resolution will be an asset.

Building on the EPA's Watershed Protection Approach, using the Nature Conservancy's Biological and Conservation Database System, and using the information and expertise of the Natural Heritage Programs and their state/federal partners, the parties catalogued occurrences of threatened, endangered and candidate species, as well as species of special concern. Information on populations of wetland, riparian, aquatic and terrestrial species and ecological community occurrences and overall quality of biological diversity in the South Platte Watershed.

This information was spatially analyzed to determine the boundaries of Potential Conservation sites that encompass the ecological processes affecting the survival of one or more occurrences of species and ecological communities of concern. Known threats to the Sites were reported.

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<sup>2</sup> Colorado Natural Heritage Program, 254 General Services Building, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523 (970-491-1150)

<sup>3</sup> Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, 1604 Grand Avenue, Suite 2, Laramie, WY 82070 (307-745-5026).

<sup>4</sup> Nebraska Natural Heritage Program, Game and Parks Commission, 2200 North 33 rd Street, P.O. Box 30370, Lincoln, NE 68503 (402-471-5421)

The resulting GIS databases, maps and this report will serve as an important information resource for EPA and Denver Water Board managers whose decisions may potentially affect critical biological resources. In addition, these products will be made widely available to the public, enhancing the resource conservation programs of numerous organizations and agencies including, but not limited to:

- √ County and other local planning offices
- √ Community involvement in land and water use decisions
- √ Denver Water Board and Water Conservation District watershed management programs
- √ USFWS listed species protection programs
- √ The Western Governors' Association Great Plains Initiative
- √ The Nature Conservancy's bioreserve and natural heritage inventory programs
- √ Gap Analysis programs

## **Acknowledgments**

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of the Environmental Protection Agency whose grant of \$110,000 over 3 years was instrumental in providing the seed money and the framework for all that was accomplished. In particular, Bill Wuerthele of EPA Region VIII and John Pai of EPA Washington Office, Office of Water, provided the vision and partnership that allowed this project to achieve such a high level of success.

In addition, the Denver Water Board's matching contribution of \$5,000 helped to strengthen the public-private partnerships that were key to the widespread support for this project in local communities and South Platte Forum.